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ABSTRACT

The suggestions in this document are designed to help teachers do a better job of teaching reading. They include suggestions for setting up specific lesson objectives, teaching skills in a developmental sequence, developing lessons within a term- or year-long comprehensive plan of reading goals, conducting ongoing evaluation of pupils' skill acquisition and application, teaching a small amount thoroughly rather than a lot superficially, reviewing previously learned skills, encouraging active pupil participation, diagnosing pupil reading ability on a continuous basis, providing materials appropriate for each pupil's achievement and interests, learning pupils' independent and instructional reading levels, and developing awareness of the difference between reading and teaching reading. (JM)

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LET'S TEACH READING BETTER! 20 SUGGESTIONS FOR LESSONS ON SPECIFIC READING SKILLS

1. Teaching should proceed through a three-phase cycle: a) development of understanding of what is being taught; b) the actual teaching of the skill; c) the application of the skill in a natural reading situation. The largest proportion of the time should be in the teaching phase which also includes teacher-supervised practice with reading exercises.
2. Every lesson should have **specific** objectives. If a lesson has more than one objective, the objectives should be related and compatible.
3. Teach skills in appropriate developmental sequence. Helpful guides may be found in curriculum bulletins published by local and state educational agencies and professional groups. Published materials usually have their own guides for the sequence of the particular programs.
4. All reading lessons should fit into an overall, comprehensive plan of reading goals developed for the particular school term or year. However, teachers should be flexible and responsive to demonstrated needs of pupils, and should organize lessons and skills needed even if these do not fall within the original plan.
5. Provision should be made for ongoing evaluation of pupils' acquisition and application of skills taught and reviewed. Such evaluation can be built into the lessons themselves, as well as form a separate activity.
6. Pupils should always be aware of what they are doing, why they are doing it, and how well they are doing, plus given guidance in how to improve their performance when this is necessary.

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7. Proceed at the pupil's rate of learning -- no faster, no slower. This means working with small groups, if not using complete individualization.
8. It is better to teach a little bit thoroughly than a lot superficially. Therefore, do not attempt to teach too much at one time. There is a big difference between "covering" and "teaching."
9. All activities within a lesson should be focused on the development of the specific skill being taught. Do not clutter your lesson with unrelated and/or unnecessary activities.
10. Review of previously learned skills can be and should be incorporated into lessons on new skills.
11. Do not tell any more than you have to. Structure your lessons so that you elicit information from the pupils. Use questioning to lead them to discover the relationships, associations, and generalizations involved.
12. Teaching and practice activities should entail active pupil participation and overt responses.
13. Be a diagnostic teacher. This means teaching with a pencil and paper at hand so that you can make notes concerning pupils' errors and difficulties. Future lessons should incorporate work designed to overcome these deficiencies.
14. Materials and techniques used should be appropriate in regard to the reading achievement level of the pupils, the difficulty level of the skill(s) being taught, the interests and concerns of the pupils.
15. Know the pupils' independent and instructional reading levels. Word identification lessons should use instructional level materials; comprehension, fluency, and study skills lessons should use independent level materials, for teaching purposes. Subsequent practice and application of skills should be in instructional level materials. "Free" reading and at-home reading should be at independent level.

16. Materials used should center on the skill(s) being taught and should permit the application of these skills.

17. All teacher-prepared materials should be clear and legible. Use black felt pens and manuscript print for hand-made materials. Use a primer typewriter for typing primary grade materials. Double or triple space typewritten materials.

18. Know the difference between and among:

    a. reading

    b. teaching reading skills

    c. reviewing

    d. supervising pupils as they do exercises

    e. checking and testing

19. Be aware of what is teaching and what is application and practice. Exercises enable pupils to practice and apply - they do not teach. Be certain that exercises used do indeed provide for the practice and application of the skill being taught, and not something else. Design your own exercises or modify published ones if you cannot find published material that focuses on precisely the skill(s) of your particular lesson.

20. Be particularly aware of the difference between <u>reading</u> and <u>teaching reading</u>. The reading of stories is the practice and application of skills in reading, within a natural reading situation. But it does not teach reading skills. It is also the hoped-for outcome of the learning of reading skills in the first place. Both reading and **teaching** reading are important aspects of the reading instructional program; both need to be included in the program, in proper balance. Be specific in teaching reading skills and then provide opportunities for the use of those skills in reading.